

Forum: Six Party Talks

Question of: Resolving political tensions between the Republic of Korea and Japan

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Introduction

The Second World War was one of the notable starts to the rising political tensions between the ROK and Japan. WWII not only took the lives of millions worldwide but also heavily impacted how Koreans live. Korea has been under Japan's rule for roughly 36 years and had to fight against their oppression¹. Japan has created sex slaves, comfort women, and forced laborers. Because of the fear of social ostracization, many comfort women have remained silent². However, since the late 20th century, South Korea has been urging a reevaluation of compensation for war victims who are still experiencing physical and mental pain. Although any agreements and treaties were made to solve this issue, South Koreans were never satisfied with the insincere apology and the lacking care to benefit the needs of the victims.

An issue that is still in the air today is the issue of the sex slaves of World War II. Not only have they been raped, but the mental change after this incident is large. In South Korea, Japanese soldiers would kidnap, lie, or buy these young girls and women to rape them for pleasure. These soldiers would promise the women of jobs as a nurse or in the Japanese army leading them to be raped. Nearly 200,000 Korean women and young girls were used as sex slaves in South Korea.³ These individuals were raped 20-30 times per day during a week and up to 40 times a day on the weekends. This led nearly 90% of the comfort women who had to endure this unjustified pain to end up dead. What Koreans are most fed up with is that Japan showed no shame or remorse even after Korea declared its independence in 1945. Koreans were forced into sex slavery, and nothing was done about it for the next 50 years despite the fact

¹ Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). *Korea under Japanese rule*. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Korea/Korea-under-Japanese-rule>

² Shin, M. (2021, January 28). *Conflict between South Korea and Japan surges again with court's 'comfort women' decision*. – The Diplomat. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/conflict-between-south-korea-and-japan-surges-again-with-courts-comfort-women-decision/>

³ Blakemore, E. (2018, February 20). *The brutal history of Japan's 'Comfort women'*. History.com. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.history.com/news/comfort-women-japan-military-brothels-korea>

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that it was acknowledged that it was embarrassing for the country. Which is the reason why Korea has avoided the subject for over 50 years. The idea of being a sex slave and having a comfort women affair was a disgrace. Only 18 to 20 victims remain since it was kept hidden for so long, leaving many victims dead.⁴

Additionally, the families in Korea were forced to work for Japanese countries during the annexation of Korea. For instance, roughly 780,000 Koreans worked in mines and factories in horrid working conditions and without pay or rest. Japan has been accused of being insensitive and ignorant of the history of Koreans who were tortured with forced labor during this time. These victims have been seeking compensation from Japanese companies such as Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. One of the areas of importance in this discussion is the Sado mine complex. This complex was one of the world's biggest gold producers; however, its success was due to the exploitation of over 1,000 Korean laborers. Therefore, when this mine was moved to the Sado mine complex to the list of heritage sites, Korea Herald quickly pointed out that this action was simply “whitewash[ing] the brutality that took place during its rule of Korea.”⁵

The agreement to restore diplomatic ties between South Korea and Japan was reached in 1965.⁶ However, as the victims began to demand recompense in the twenty-first century, the Korean government aggressively supported comfort women in 1991 and persistently asked Japan to apologize sincerely. The main trend that we see with the Korean citizens is that they demand for more repercussions as they have misjudged how much the comfort women needed. Additionally, it is shown how the Korean citizens demand for Japan and their leaders to apologize; however, their apologies were never recognized to be sincere. Yohei Kono, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, claims that all the actions done in the past were wrong and that he regrets the idea of comfort women in 1993. He clearly states the wrongfulness of the act and how it shouldn't have been done. Unfortunately, the Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe refuted claims that Japan had forced comfort women to work against their will not long after, infuriating many Koreans,

⁴ Gersen, J. S. (2021, February 26). *Seeking the true story of the comfort women*. The New Yorker. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-inquiry/seeking-the-true-story-of-the-comfort-women-j-m-rk-ramseyer>

⁵ Blakemore, E. (2018, February 28). *How Japan took control of Korea*. History.com. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.history.com/news/japan-colonization-korea>

⁶ Diplomat, J. J. for T. (2020, October 23). *The Japan-korea dispute over the 1965 agreement*. – The Diplomat. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/the-japan-korea-dispute-over-the-1965-agreement/>

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including the victims.⁷ Korean individuals simply did not see the seriousness of the issue, nor did they directly apologize for the harm. It refuted the assertions made in 1993, which sparked Korean campaigns and demonstrations supporting paying comfort women, like the "Wednesday demonstration."⁸ These Wednesday demonstrations are one of the longest-held demonstrations to showcase the wants of the Japanese government. President Park and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met later in 2015 to resolve the comfort ladies issue. Once the agreement was reached, Japan paid Korea \$8.3 million, and both parties agreed not to bring up the subject again.⁹ However, many Koreans and the victims argued that Japan did not make an official apology, and they continued to demand a true apology from Japan. President Moon has been working to put pressure on the Japanese government to make them pay compensation for the victims, despite President Park's failure to address the problem. We are able to see that the issue of comfort women is still not entirely addressed due to South Korea's hesitation to affect apologize of Japan.

The current situation is extremely calm compared to the climax of the trade conflict between Japan and South Korea, which started in 2019. It all started when Korean companies tried to buy three chemicals from Japanese corporations, and Tokyo placed trade restrictions on them. When attempting to do so, these corporations have asserted that Korea could not adequately handle these chemicals and, as a result, will not offer them these items. They removed them from their white list; Korea did the same. But there is a deeper issue at play in this trade conflict.¹⁰ When Japan annexed South Korea in 1910, they made women work as prostitutes and men work in mines. Korea believes that this act is extremely immoral and should be compensated. The colonization came to an end in 1945, and Japan signed a treaty promising to compensate South Korea for the harm the colonization had caused. However, this treaty was perceived as insufficient and untrue to the harms they had created. More precisely, it didn't pay for the expenses associated with comfort women's requirements. As a result, Japan granted South Korea \$10

⁷ Osaki, T. (2018, January 12). *Abe rejects Seoul's new call for apology on 'comfort women' issue*. The Japan Times. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/01/12/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-rejects-kangs-new-apology-call-comfort-women-issue/>

⁸ *Wednesday demonstration for*. Wednesday demonstration for "comfort women" victims hit 1,500 mark : National : News : The Hankyoreh. (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2022, from https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/1003715.html

⁹ BBC. (2019, December 2). *South Korea and Japan's Feud explained*. BBC News. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49330531>

¹⁰ Kim, C. (2019, August 9). *The escalating trade war between South Korea and Japan, explained*. Vox. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.vox.com/world/2019/8/9/20758025/trade-war-south-korea-japan>

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million in 2015 to support women in finding solace in their history.¹¹ Even after these effects, South Koreans continued to feel that something needed to be done and began to avoid buying Japanese goods. The boycotting was extremely large in South Korea, where you would be looked down upon if you entered a Japanese-owned store. However, boycotting was not only due to the issue of war crimes.¹² It was also due to how the semi-conductors used in many electronics were now hard to transport due to Korea being removed from the white list. Therefore, Korea's major income companies, such as Samsung, were not able to get the parts they needed due to their heavy reliance on Japan for these parts. Hence, they boycotted to ensure they could get these parts transported to Korea again. When Moon Jae-in was elected president of South Korea in 2017, he pointed out the inadequacy of Japan's consequences. Japan agreed to compensate South Korea for the harm caused by the colonialism when the colony came to an end in 1945 by signing a treaty. However, it was believed that this contract was insufficient and untrue in light of their inflicted harm. More precisely, it didn't pay for comfort women's requirements, which are expensive. To help women feel better about their history, Japan donated \$10 million to South Korea in 2015. South Koreans continued to boycott Japanese goods even after these consequences because they didn't think they went far enough.

In 2013, when Shinzo Abe was stepping down from his role as Prime Minister, Abe posted a photo of his visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. He stated that he went there to inform the spirits of his resignation.¹³ However, this action was extremely controversial among China and ROK due to the war criminals being located in this area. When he was Prime Minister, he stayed away from this shrine, knowing the controversy surrounding the area. China and ROK were infuriated with this action, and the United States also expressed disappointment. The Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga did not visit the shrine since he was designated the role. He has also sent a offering to the South Korean government to express their “deep regret”¹⁴

¹¹ *Understanding the South Korea-Japan trade dispute and its impacts on U.S. foreign policy*. ITIF. (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://itif.org/publications/2020/01/16/understanding-south-korea-japan-trade-dispute-and-its-impacts-us-foreign/>

¹² Jeong-cheol Bae, H.-kyu K. and Y.-chung R. (2021, December 6). *End of no-Japanese boycott? Uniqlo Korea turns to black*. KED Global. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.kedglobal.com/retail/newsView/ked202112050001#:~:text=South%20Korean%20civic%20groups%20launched,first%20time%20in%20a%20year.>

¹³ BBC. (2020, September 19). Yasukuni shrine: Japan's ex-PM abe visits controversial memorial. BBC News. Retrieved July 23, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54216632>

¹⁴ Person. (2021, August 14). Explainer: Why yasukuni shrine is a controversial symbol of Japan's war legacy. Reuters. Retrieved July 23, 2022, from

There were several attempts to solve this issue; however, no treaty nor agreement was able to benefit both sides; hence, the treaties ended up being broken. On June 22nd, 1965, a treaty was signed between Japan and Korea to benefit the diplomatic relations between the two countries. This set the basis for understanding that the 1910 Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty was illegal. Korea was able to get compensation from Japan for the human rights abuses that were enacted during the rule. It can be understood that this agreement was the diplomatic efforts of the Korean government. Therefore, the main problem with this treaty was that the agreement made the Korean government compensate the victims, however, Korea believes that Japan should still pay compensation. It is important to note that many have stated that this ruling should be consistent with international law. However, Korea would want to oppose this act due to Korea having the possibility of losing and possibly losing international credibility.¹⁵

One of the agreements made in the past to hopefully solve the issue on both sides was the 2016 Japan Korea Comfort Women Agreement. After the former prime minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, apologized for Japan's actions during the colonization, this agreement was created to "finally and irreversibly" end the conflict.¹⁶ Japan was offering 1 billion yen as an apology along with this agreement. However, only after 3 weeks after this agreement, Abe claimed that there was no physical evidence or documents that proved that the comfort women were forcibly taken away. Offended by this statement, Korea asked for an apology. However, Abe was quick to dismiss Koreans and stated that he had no intention of apologizing again. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women denounced Abe's comments and expressed how unacceptable those words were.

Definition of Key Terms

WWII

Nazi Germany and European countries were at the heart of the worldwide war of World War II (WWII). On both sides, they have partnered with major countries. For instance, Germany made alliances with Japan and Italy, while Britain, France, the US, and the USSR went against them. This event is crucial

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/why-yasukuni-shrine-is-controversial-symbol-japans-war-legacy-2021-08-13/>

¹⁵ Diplomat, J. J. for T. (2020, October 23). *The Japan-korea dispute over the 1965 agreement*. – The Diplomat. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/the-japan-korea-dispute-over-the-1965-agreement/>

¹⁶ Kim, J., & Park, J.-min. (2015, December 29). South Korea, Japan agree to irreversibly end 'comfort women' row. Reuters. Retrieved July 23, 2022, from

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-southkorea-comfortwomen-idUSKBN0UB0EC20151229>

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to the diplomatic tensions between Japan and South Korea as this event caused the annexation of Korea to occur.

Comfort Women/Sex Slave

During the period when Korea was annexed by Japan, the military officials created sex slaves out of women and young girls. These comfort women were hidden and safe from disease by the creation of the comfort stations. These station's sole purpose was to please the Japanese Army with the rape of women and girls. Notably, these women were taken by force and, most of the time, lied to and kidnapped. Most of these citizens could not survive the experience, but those who did suffer from the memories.¹⁷

Forced Labour

People who are forced to perform work or services against their will are said to be engaged in forced labor. They use violence, intimidation, manipulation of debt, identity documents, and threats to immigration to force work on these individuals. Japan consistently rejects requests for compensations relating to forced labor; as a result, no adequate compensations have been received as of yet.

War Crime

A crime carried out during war violating the international rules of law. When there is an unnecessary injury inflicted upon the enemy, it would be a war crime. For instance, forced labour, sexual assault, murder, etc.

Trade War

A trade war is an economic conflict between two nations to harm the other nation's economy. This is often carried out through the use of higher tariffs on exports or general restrictions on international products. Trade wars may result from many reasons, including social reasons or the personal interests of nations. The nations affected by trade wars rarely benefit from the destruction of their adversaries but are harmed by trade restrictions and retaliatory policies. Rather than ending with a single victor, trade wars are simply competitions testing whether countries can outlast each other in the face of economic restrictions. Trade wars simply create a zero-sum game where neither country involved is better off and, at best, will be in an antebellum state economically.

White List

¹⁷ How did the comfort women issue come to light? (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.awf.or.jp/e2/survey.html>

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A White List of Nations refers to the list of countries made by a certain country/government that allows them to trade without surveillance with each other. When South Korea was taken off the White List, the trade between these two countries became extremely hard with rigorous vetting procedures, longer approval, and closer examinations. This refers to a country putting on more trade restrictions to a country. With the removal from the whitelist, countries are forced to be keener on checking the exports and imports. However, when taken off the whitelist, as trade is harder, companies are less likely to trade with other companies in those countries.

Annexation

Act of seizing another country and taking control of it. In WWII, Japan annexed South Korea, taking control of their land, especially with the military occupation of the land. The war crimes and illegal actions done during this period of annexation are the reason why there are major diplomatic tensions between South Korea and Japan.

Semi-Conductors

These materials are used in electronics to ensure electrical conductivity. Simply said, they are crucial parts of electronics to ensure their function. Korea needs these parts due to their GDP mainly comes from electronics. Unfortunately, their semiconductors come from Japan, and there is an extremely heavy reliance on them for these parts. Therefore, when they were taken off the white list, these semi-conductors were not transported to them anymore. One of the reasons why they started boycotting Japanese products.

Boycott

Boycotting is a nonviolent way of protest of what they believe is incorrect. For example, individuals might not buy from a certain brand because they do not share the same values. In this instance, individuals believed that Japan was not acting in their best interest in both situations of comfort women and semiconductors and therefore started to boycott all Japanese products.

Timeline of Key Events (10 events)

29 August 1910-15 August 1945 - Japanese Colonization of Korea

During WWII, Japan decided that it was in its best interest to annex South Korea. This decision has left a major impact on both Japan and South Korea. During this period, Japan burned several Korean historical documents and their homes. Their identity was taken away, with 84 percent of Koreans taking on Japanese names. Close to 725,000 Koreans started to work in Japan and other colonies; out of these

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individuals, thousand of Korean women were put in the lives of “comfort women” and “sexual slaves who served in military brothels”.¹⁸ These women were kidnapped or coerced. They would convince the women to be comfort women by lying to them that they will give them jobs or they might even purchase them from their parents. The impacts of these actions are still seen today, trying to achieve peace for those who were forced into being comfort women. However, many claim that over 90 percent of comfort women did not even survive the war. In 1919, Korean individuals wanted liberty and freedom; hence, more than 1,500 demonstrations broke out during this time. However, these demonstrations were inevitably shot down, and citizens were killed.¹⁹

22 June 1965 - Japan-Korea Treaty on Basic Relations

The treaty on basic relations was created to create a settlement with respect to the annexation of Korea. More specifically, they wanted to ensure that the diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea were positive. Korea received roughly \$300 million from Japan, this would have been the full and final settlement to compensate for the actions and claims. Korea claims that this compensation was not enough and should be compensated more for Japan's abuse of human rights. However, Japan claims that they also already provided a sufficient amount of compensation needed to give to Korea for the issue of comfort women and forced labor. This contradiction is crucial to resolving the political tensions between the two countries.²⁰

14 August 1991 - Public testimony of Kim Hak-Sun

It is important to understand that in traditional Korean culture, those who lost their virginity were considered unworthy of marriage and stigmatized. This is the main reason why so many victims were extremely afraid to step up and talk about the crime that would have been lost. In 1991, Kim Hak-Sun gave a public testimony about her experiences. She explained the series of false claims and lies of comfort women who were told to hide the crimes. She stated, "Each woman had to serve an average of three to four soldiers on regular days, and seven to eight soldiers after battles".²¹ Her testimony showed how

¹⁸ Blakemore, E. (2018, February 28). *How Japan took control of Korea*. History.com. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.history.com/news/japan-colonization-korea>

¹⁹ Blakemore, E. (2018, February 20). *The brutal history of Japan's 'Comfort women'*. History.com. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.history.com/news/comfort-women-japan-military-brothels-korea>

²⁰ Diplomat, J. J. for T. (2020, October 23). *The Japan-korea dispute over the 1965 agreement*. – The Diplomat. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/the-japan-korea-dispute-over-the-1965-agreement/>

²¹ General timeline of the Japanese military "Comfort women" system. Friendly Korea. (n.d.). Retrieved July 23, 2022, from

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individuals understood that the compensation they received was not enough and that it was a larger issue than believed. This brought international attention to this issue.²²

8 January 1992 - Wednesday Demonstration

The first Wednesday demonstration was held on Jan 8th, 1992, and has become the “world’s longest-running single-issue demonstration”. It is said that this demonstration has become a sign for every victim of military sexual slavery all around the world. The 1,500th Wednesday demonstration was also in partner with the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan. The demonstrations want Japan to “accept the victim’s demands for an acknowledgement of its war crimes, a genuine apology, and legal compensation, and the dignity of the victims [to be] fully restored”.²³

December 1997 - Death of Kim Hak-Sun

Kim Hak-Sun is one of the most important individuals when it comes to understanding how this problem got to the public. She was the first comfort women to testify in public. This is a major turn as in the past, identifying yourself as a person who got raped would mean extreme scurtiny and embrassment. She was also the individual who filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government and hence got it to international attention. Her wish when she died was so that the victims would not get money from the deceptive funds. Which is why she donated all her money to charity right before her death.

28 December 2015 - Comfort Women Agreement

South Korean governments and Japanese governments created an Agreement on Comfort women however, was not satisfactory with all citizens. Kishida Fumio, a former foreign minister of Japan and current prime minister, recognized the misfortunes of the issue before and how wants to pay full responsibility for their actions.²⁴ Additional to this they decided to offer 1 billion yen to apologize for their actions. Though Japan agrees that it is irreversible, this money was given to ensure that the process

<http://korea.prkorea.com/wordpress/english/2012/10/26/general-timeline-of-the-japanese-military-comfort-women-system/>

²² How did the comfort women issue come to light? (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.awf.or.jp/e2/survey.html>

²³ *Wednesday demonstration for*. Wednesday demonstration for "comfort women" victims hit 1,500 mark : National : News : The Hankyoreh. (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2022, from https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/1003715.html

²⁴ Hosaka, Y. (2021, November 18). *Why did the 2015 Japan-korea 'comfort women' agreement fall apart?* – The Diplomat. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/why-did-the-2015-japan-korea-comfort-women-agreement-fall-apart/#:~:text=In%20addition%2C%20the%20Japanese%20government,measures%20will%20be%20implemented%20steadily>

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to help them is started. However, right after this agreement, Abe came out and stated that there are no documents that can be found that comfort women were forcibly taken. When asked to apologize for these words, he simply brushed it off and said that he had “no intention of apologizing again”. Therefore, Korean citizens still wish for a sincere apology and understanding of the actions they have taken in the past.²⁵

30 October 2018 - Korean Supreme Court Rules Against Japanese Steel Company

The Supreme Court of Korea and of Japan had two opposing views regarding the compensation of these individuals. While the Korean Supreme Court stated that Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal would have to pay 100 million won to all four victims due to the comfort women issue, The Japanese Supreme Court stated that no violation happened. Therefore, even though they have fought hard for the rights of these individuals and the further competition to ensure that these citizens do live a positive life, they were not able to receive competition from these companies.²⁶

1 July 2019 - Korea-Japan Trade War

The Korea-Japan Trade War started when Japan started making trade restrictions on Korean companies regarding chemicals. The underlying reason why this conflict happens is because of the boycotts from Koreans. After the comfort women issue was not solved with the wants of South Korea, the citizens started to boycott Japanese products. Tokyo took Seoul off their white list, “a list of trustworthy trade partners”; therefore, Seoul did the same. This made it so that the trade between these two countries became extremely difficult. In 2019, South Korea withdrew from the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) that focuses on sharing information on DPRK’s nuclear activity. All of these factors created a world in which the diplomatic relationship between countries has fallen.²⁷

8 January 2021-23 January 2021 - Seoul Central District Court’s Comfort Women Decision

²⁵ Hosaka, Y. (2021, November 18). *Why did the 2015 Japan-korea 'comfort women' agreement fall apart?* – The Diplomat. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/why-did-the-2015-japan-korea-comfort-women-agreement-fall-apart/#:~:text=In%20addition%2C%20the%20Japanese%20government,measures%20will%20be%20implemented%20steadily>

²⁶ 김은경. (2021, December 30). *Court orders sale of Nippon Steel Assets to compensate wartime forced labor*. Yonhap News Agency. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20211230008400325>

²⁷ *Understanding the South Korea-Japan trade dispute and its impacts on U.S. foreign policy*. ITIF. (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://itif.org/publications/2020/01/16/understanding-south-korea-japan-trade-dispute-and-its-impacts-us-foreign/>

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Similar to previous efforts, the Seoul Central District Court filed a lawsuit against the Government of Japan to compensate for the 12 Korean Comfort Women. However, even on top of this, to pay them 100 million Korean won. This lawsuit was filed more than 6 years ago, and hence the majority of the comfort women have died. Therefore, the payment would not directly help the comfort women. Additionally, Japan has rejected this lawsuit and the ruling because they said they would not give any additional compensation. In the eyes of Japan, they have already given so much compensation to the citizens; therefore, the solution should only be reached through communication.

Position of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies

Japan

It is necessary to understand that Japan realizes that the situation South Koreans had to face was awful and therefore regrets their actions. However, Japan believes that the reactions from South Korea are too extreme. They have already paid multiple repercussions that South Korea demanded on the topic of the annexation and the comfort women. They have already paid roughly \$800-300 million dollars in economic aid, 200 million dollars in loans, and 300 million dollars in a private trust. Even after the multiple massive compensations, it would not be justified for South Korea to ask for more repercussions. However, Japan does realize that its actions in the past were dreadful. Therefore, there is some openness to paying little repercussions to South Korea if it means that this conflict will end. It is important to note that there is hesitancy to give compensation. Additionally, the compensation of South Korea would mean compensation to everyone that was affected by Japan in World War II. Hence, Japan is further hesitant to give compensation.

ROK

The political tensions between South Korea stem from the incidents when Japan annexed South Korea. However, rooting from that incident, many other tensions arose. Firstly, South Korea believes that the repercussions they have received were inadequate compared to the trauma and suffering they have faced. Hence, they have constantly been asking Japan to pay repercussions demanded from the country and their court. For instance, the reparations of 1965, Korea claims, were insincere and did not help comfort women. Additionally, when Korea was removed from Japan's whitelist, it severely impacted their major corporations. Consequently, their complicated relationship continues while their perception of the other worsens. Due to Korea boycotting multiple of their products, the effect they receive makes the situation worse. For instance, Korea has boycotted UNIQLO, a Japanese clothing brand, and any

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individual who dared to enter would be stigmatized. This led to roughly 190 stores closing. It is notable to mention that the boycotting of Japanese products has calmed down.

China

During World World II, Japan annexed and affected China. In the process, the citizens of China were taken away from their homes for forced labor, not to mention the existence of Chinese comfort women. Though the conversation puts Korea in the limelight, Chinese women were the “largest group of women to be held by the Japanese military as sex slaves”.²⁸ For example, the Japanese military invaded a city in China called Nanjing, where Chinese citizens were raped and murdered in masses. The Rape of Nanjing affected 20,000 to 80,000 women. Hence, China believes that countries that were affected by Japan should be compensated for the massive impacts imposed on their citizens. During this debate, China supports Korea in their advocacy for getting compensation; furthermore, they advocate for their voices to be heard and for their suffering also to be compensated.²⁹

DPRK

During the Japanese rule, DPRK was a part of Korea and hence was equally affected by Japan. DPRK believes this incident is part of their history and has comfort women in their land. However, DPRK does not publicly announce their beliefs as this issue is less important than other issues in their land. However, if the ruling on this issue does state that South Korea should get compensated, it is inevitable for Japan to compensate DPRK as they were equally affected.

US

Compared to other countries of the SPT, the US is quite balanced in its opinion regarding this situation. As they are allies with both ROK and Japan, it is hard for them to express an opinion that weighs more on one side. They have expressed sympathy for comfort women in the past by negotiating agreements on both sides in 2015. Former President of the US, Obama, has continuously congratulated after their agreement towards the leaders of both countries, which shows that they want to resolve the conflict more than anything. Politically, it is important for the US to resolve the issue and ensure the cooperation of both sides: especially when it comes to keeping DPRK in check.³⁰

²⁸ Narratives of World War II in the Pacific. Chinese Comfort Women · Narratives of World War II in the Pacific · Bell Library Exhibits. (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://library.tamucc.edu/exhibits/s/hist4350/page/CCW>

²⁹ History.com Editors. (2009, November 9). *Nanking massacre*. History.com. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.history.com/topics/japan/nanjing-massacre>

³⁰ Eilperin, J. (2016, January 9). *Agreement on 'comfort women' offers strategic benefit to U.S. in Asia-Pacific*. The Washington Post. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from

Russia

Russia is not as involved in this conflict compared to other countries as they are not situated next to Korea. However, during the war, Japan took a part of their land named the Kuril Islands, and they are more inclined to side with Korea in this conflict.

Suggested Solutions

The direct clash between ROK and Japan creates a situation where no solution can be found. While ROK demands Japan compensation, Japan refuses to do so. Due to these polarizing forces having no middle ground, compromise from either side would mean giving up their opinion. Though resolving the issue to benefit both sides is impossible, it is in the benefit of both countries and those surrounding it to resolve the underlying tension between these countries. Therefore, we can create situations where politicians' tensions decrease, and one side decides to compensate.

The immediate action that should be taken is to create summits and meetings to hopefully communicate and understand to the position of both countries. Therefore, under the inspection of the UN, they will be able to bi-annual meetings to propose their evidence and hopefully end with a solution. Bi-annual meetings have been proven to be successful in the past in resolving issues that surround countries. Even if these meetings might not be able to resolve the issue completely, it brings us a mechanism to allow a conversation to concur. This first step is crucial to resolving any issue as the lack of communication regarding this topic will only create more confusion and tensions to arise. With the citizens being angered by the other country's opinions and actions, they also perform actions that tend to increase the tensions between these countries. Therefore, with no communication, there is no room for clearing up misunderstandings nor a way for the countries to understand one another. Throughout history, textbooks have been written from the country's perspective. Therefore, even in the beginning, there is a lack of understanding and care for the other country. The stigma, rhetoric, and ideologies between these countries also serve as a way that these tensions are created. Consequently, communicating effectively and frequently is a major way in which we will be able to solve these issues at hand. However, these meetings will not work if one country is unwilling to cooperate due to other tensions. Therefore, having the US, a balanced force, incentivize them to join or relieve surrounding tensions would solve this problem. For instance, bringing in conversations about Japan removing ROK from their white list. This was a major issue for South Korea, and by giving this incentive, they will be more willing to cooperate with Japan.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/agreement-on-comfort-women-offers-ancillary-benefit-to-us-in-asia-pacific/2016/01/09/41a03d84-b54c-11e5-a842-0feb51d1d124_story.html

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Even if no solution is reached with these meetings, the main benefit is that the country's leaders are meeting and having opportunities to resolve tensions.

Additionally, there is also a disconnect between the comfort women citizens and the South Korean government. It is crucial to create a communication ladder for these women to speak out about their own experiences. While the government focuses on helping these women, many claim that they are not extremely knowledgeable about the specific situations they were placed in. For example, some politicians are known to ask for money from Japan to compensate for the comfort women, however, they use that money for their own personal affairs. Therefore, if these comfort women were more involved in the process, they would be able to voice out these occurrences. Furthermore, the compensation received before by Korea was not enough to support these comfort women. One of the reasons for this might be due to the fact that their voices were not heard nor their opinion. Hence, if Japan is willing to compensate, to reach a certain amount of money compensated to these women. The compensation that was given to them in the past was not enough. Therefore, the direct impact would be a clearer understanding of comfort women and their needs. If they are able to receive some sort of compensation, they will be able to allocate the money effectively to places where the comfort women actually need. This communication ladder might be through meetings or factor ways to ensure their opinions are communicated frequently with government officials. Potentially, allowing these victims to speak regarding the meetings between Japan and Korea might help find a solution that both parties can somewhat agree upon.

Lastly, creating a database with all the historical information from all countries involved will help preserve our history. Though the textbooks might communicate the situation as a whole, they fail to address the specific issues that are, unfortunately, hidden. Therefore, all of the information, transactions, past attempts to resolve the issue, artifacts, and historical texts should be placed in a permanent record for anyone to see. It is important to note that there are some countries in which their official documents were lost or stolen. Hence, all information and records will need to be verified by experts and ensure that there is no contradicting evidence proposed by the countries. This database might be created by the UNHRC (UN Human Rights Committee) or other sections of the UN, along with countries involved with the issue, for instance, Japan, Korea, and China. Any country with evidence and historical records that can provide a deeper understanding of the topic would be encouraged to add to the database. Ensuring that the UN and balanced forces such as the US are involved in creating the database will help create a much less biased and comprehensive database. It is important to note that past attempts to resolve the issue will also be added to this database to help further create future solutions.

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Another benefit that comes from creating a database where we are constantly verifying and adding information is that we can increase transparency. As stated above, many situations in which large portions of the money given to Korea to benefit their victims ended up being used for the politicians' benefit. Therefore, by recording these transactions and the attempts to solve the issue, we can verify that money is being used to help the needy. Hence, if there is a lack of money used on comfort women compared to the amount given, those overlooking the database, potentially the UN, will intervene with the situation and ensure justice. When this database is created, politicians will have no incentive or ability to use the lack of transparency for their own benefit. There will be severe consequences for those who use money or other factors to benefit themselves; especially due to the international eye on these countries, other relations that might be crucial to their economy might be at stake.

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